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The Afrikaner Broederbond—1**A Secret Government**

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Cape Town, Even earlier, in 1935, Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog, founder of the

It has for some time been evident that, violence apart, any change in the political power structure in South Africa would come about only as the result of a sufficiently wide crack in the Nationalist party. During the latter half of 1963 the existence of a crack was revealed when the *Sunday Times* of Johannesburg published a series of secret documents exposing the methods and some of the names of a body known as the Afrikaner Broederbond (band of brothers).

The Broederbond is a secret society about which there is some public knowledge and much speculation. The known facts are that it was established in 1918 by a group of dedicated and extreme Afrikaners with the object of securing unity among those who desire to promote the welfare of the Afrikaner nation which, it should be remembered, constitutes one eighth only of the population of South Africa.

Its membership is as exclusive as its aims, being confined to selected Afrikaans-speaking Protestants of good character. When the inner council decides that a particular person might be suitable, he is watched and secretly reported on for two years, and only then might he be invited to become a Broeder and make the solemn promises of secrecy and devotion to the cause.

Membership today is probably not more than 5,000, only a few of whose names are public knowledge; but it includes men in positions where decisions are taken and appointments to key posts made.

This was true even before 1948 when the Nationalists came to power. Toward the end of the second world war Gen. J. C. Smuts was compelled to ban membership of the Broederbond to public servants, and in justifying his action he referred to it as "a dangerous, cunning, political, Fascist organization."

ter J. B. M. Hertzog, founder of the Nationalist party but excommunicated by the extreme wing because, two years previously he had joined hands with Smuts to form the United party, publicly castigated the Broederbond for "striving by way of domination on the part of the Afrikaans-speaking section to put their foot on the neck of English-speaking South Africa." In an open letter to his son, Dr. Albert Hertzog, he warned that the Broederbond had become "a grave menace to the rest and peace of our social community. . . ." Dr. Albert Hertzog is today Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and, as such, in charge of the state-run broadcasting corporation.

At the time when such men as Smuts and Hertzog regarded the Broederbond as a dangerous extra-political force Afrikaner nationalism was in opposition. Before 1948 it was, in fact, a secretly operated pressure group that infiltrated the top ranks of the public service, the Afrikaans universities and schools, the professions, and most important of all, the Afrikaans churches.

After 1948 Afrikaner nationalism was in power, and the Broederbond passed from the role of pressure group to that of policy-making and direct control. It is Broederbond policy that has, step by step, been implemented since 1948 with the object of entrenching Afrikaner nationalism in power against all comers.

It is common knowledge, publicly stated and never contradicted, that Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd, most of his cabinet ministers and most of his supporters in Parliament are Broeders. Two interesting exceptions are Ministers Eric Louw and Paul Sauer, both of whom have recently retired, who are said never to have been members. It is believed that this is because they are Freemasons, which, to the exclusive Broederbond, would be decidedly un-Afrikaans.

The head of the broadcasting corporation, Dr. P. Meyer, is commonly believed to be chief of the Broederbond. Certainly, there is no longer any serious pretense that the corporation is anything but the mouthpiece of the Nationalist party.

Apologists for the Broederbond argue that there is nothing wrong in Afrikaners combining to promote their own interests; and if they choose to do so secretly, that is their affair. The argument might be valid if the organization were strictly non-political. In fact, it is essentially through politics that it has achieved power, and the power it wields is fundamentally political. Decisions taken in secret and translated into law by an obedient majority in Parliament; securing the appointment of the "right" key man to implement such laws: these are the weapons used by the Broederbond.

A secret society to promote the interests of a group of individuals is one thing. When it gets control of the machinery of government it becomes the deadly enemy of democracy.

The immense power of the Broederbond is threatened from two sources. As long as it was an opposition pressure group it could depend on the loyalty and devotion of all those Afrikaners who believed that their only hope of achieving power was to remain united. Once power was achieved, its concentration in the hands of a comparatively small and select group of Broeders was bound, sooner or later, to give rise to jealousy on the part of those who do not get the big jobs or the nominations for vacant seats in Parliament.

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